How to Create the Ultimate Fan Experience
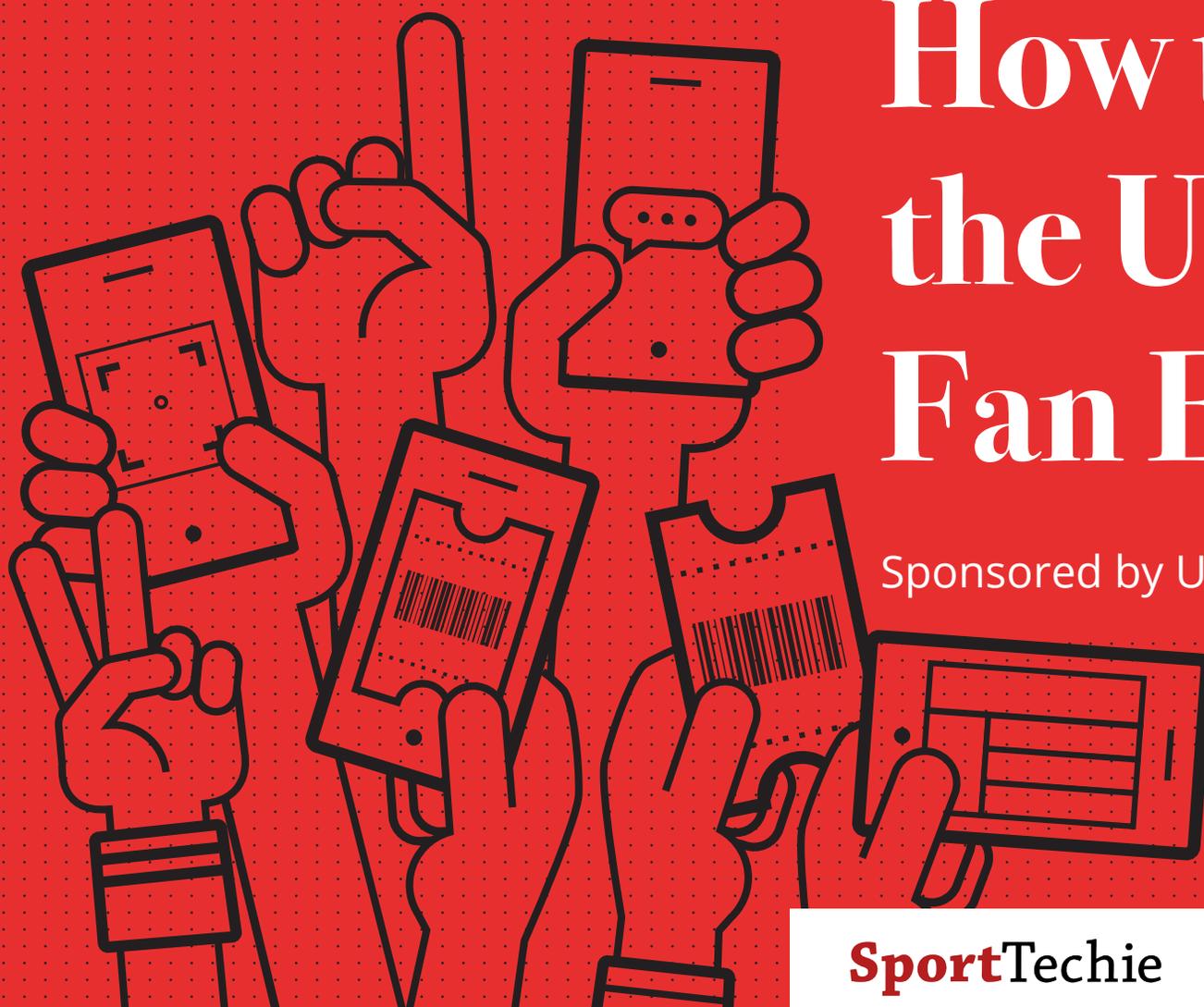
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Author: Jeff Arnold

How to Create the Ultimate Fan Experience

There was a time when the extent of a sports franchise's relationship with its fan base was regional in nature and based solely on the ticket-buying customer that passed through the turnstiles.

But once the game ended, any meaningful interaction between fans and the team drew to a close and sometimes even ceased to exist until the next time that fan chose to take in a game.

Now, in a digitally driven landscape, a high percentage of consumers rely on mobile apps to gain entry through stadium gates. Given this new reality, sports franchises and leagues alike have discovered that easily collected first-party data deepens the connection that exists between team officials and fans, who are constantly in search of ways to take their already passionate fandom to another level.

Yet, at a time when fans have myriad of options to see their teams play -- whether in person, on television or on a handheld device – the importance of maximizing the experience for those who travel to venues for live games has never been so critical.

First-party data deepens the connection that exists between team officials and fans

Discovering the optimal way to make that happen, however, isn't an exact science. That conundrum is especially prevalent within team front office and business operations, unsure of how to make the most of the wealth of information that is now at their disposal.

That's where Umbel, an industry-leading software platform based in Austin, Texas, is helping professional and university-level sports franchises navigate through what has, for many teams, been unchartered waters when it comes to creating the ultimate fan experience.

> "...the only way to really get a clear picture is to understand the fans that are engaging with the brand and digital platforms at a deeper level."

"Before, it was much simpler to talk to and understand and know your fans. Obviously, they would be coming through the doors of your building or watching your product on TV or listening on the radio," said Mike Malo, Umbel's Vice President for Business Development. "Now, there's so many ways to consume sports content on digital platforms. And by doing that, it has fragmented the audience, and the only way to really get a clear picture is to understand the fans that are engaging with the brand and digital platforms at a deeper level."
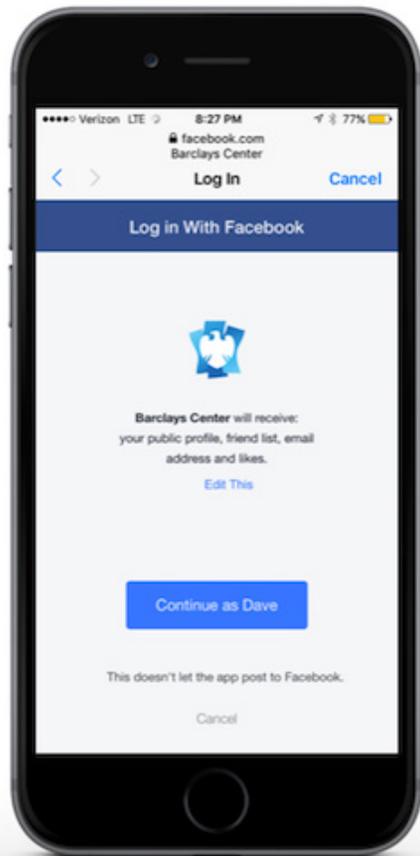
Prior to joining Umbel, Malo served as the San Antonio Spurs' Vice President of Brand Development and Marketing. His role with the Spurs offered Malo a front-row seat to what fans were seeking in terms of connecting with their favorite NBA franchise. In addition to working with the Spurs, Malo worked with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, Major League Baseball's Arizona Diamondbacks and Major League Soccer's Columbus Crew.

While working with the Spurs, Malo became part of a growing trend among team officials who are gradually understanding the importance of the first-party data that can be readily collected directly from fans.

That data, along with nuggets of preferential knowledge that can be gleaned from a fan's interaction on social media channels (e.g., Facebook Likes for various brands), is now providing franchises with more of a 360-degree view of the fan they are attempting to engage with on a deeper level.

"(Social) is really where the power lies and understanding how they want to interact with these teams and what platform they want to do it on," Malo said. "Teams are beginning to understand that there is additional value beyond being a ticketed customer. There are fans that want to consume content and there will be a continual shift

in movement in the sports industry to try to monetize the value of consumers and fans who are just content consumers."

Yet, at every turn, fan engagement is creating data that can be utilized in a variety of ways. Regardless of how a franchise may use the tools that are now readily available to them via a variety of platforms, one common denominator exists: They are understanding how to act more effectively based on the data they are receiving.

"Teams are beginning to understand that there is additional value beyond being a ticketed customer."

But the available data that can prove so invaluable comes in a variety of different forms. And once it is collected, sports executives are discovering that audience data can be used to refine marketing messaging, to drive more targeted advertising, to sell tickets and merchandise as well as create new revenue streams for sponsorships.

# Making the Most of Fans' Data at Events and Beyond

Only a couple of years ago, the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves and WNBA's Minnesota Lynx were more traditional in the manner in which they allowed fans entry into games.

Both franchises relied on fans to print paper or E-tickets, which were torn or collected as fans passed through stadium turnstiles. But beginning in 2016, both the Timberwolves and Lynx added more innovative methods of checking in: mobile phones that display game tickets, credit cards that validated their original purchase, or driver's licenses that confirmed identities.

What the franchises found was that between 75-80 percent of fans used their mobile phones to gain entry. Once fans entered the arena, the data and consumer information suddenly available to both franchises opened up a whole new world of possibilities.

"It's important for us and for our fans and our general market that when we reach out to them, we're trying to make a real connection with them," said Laura Meyer, the Timberwolves and Lynx Vice Presi-

Current Line Experience

GO TEAM!
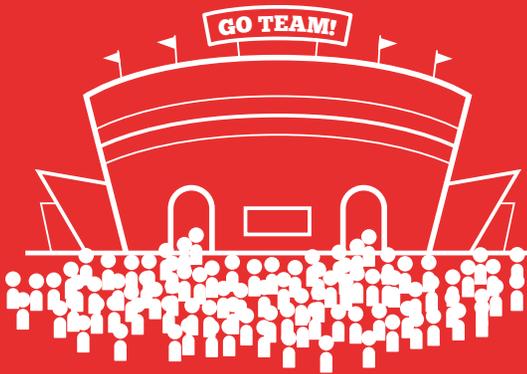
Mobile-Only Line Experience

GO TEAM!
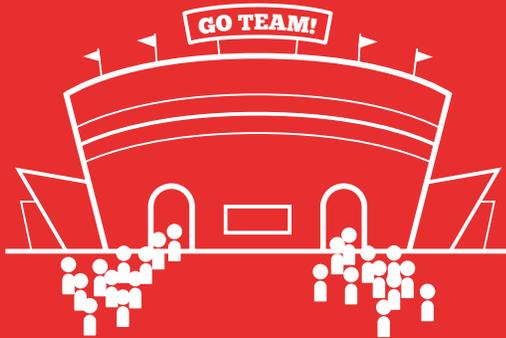
dent of Business Intelligence. "We often identify who our buyers are, who our attendees are on our website and through email. But having the opportunity to tie into first-party data is really appealing."

In 2017, the Miami Heat became the first NBA franchise to shift to mobile-only entry, eliminating paper tickets altogether. Instead, beginning this season fans will rely on the team's mobile iOS or Android app to gain entry to Heat games or open up their tickets in their mobile browser once they arrive at the arena.

The reason for the move was simple: More people - specifically one in three, according to a release posted on the Heat's team website - were already using mobile devices for their tickets last season.

"Adopting mobile-only entry is all about improving the fan experience at the American Airlines Arena," according to team statement when Heat made the announcement in August. "Mobile-only entry will make getting into the Arena seamless, simple, and fast."

The Timberwolves and Cleveland Cavaliers have also moved to mobile ticketing, but unlike the Heat, still allow fans to use their driver's license or credit card to gain access to their tickets. By going completely digital, Heat officials said the move to mobile cuts down on the franchise's carbon footprint and also cuts down on the risk of lost, stolen or counterfeit tickets.

Once fans entered the arena, the data and consumer information suddenly available to both franchises opened up a whole new world of possibilities.

Like the two Minneapolis-based franchises, the NFL's Dallas Cowboys also saw a boost in mobile ticket entry after the team began to experiment with mobile ticketing leading up to the 2015-16 season. When initial participation was extremely limited with three to six percent of fans using their phones to gain entry to Cowboys home games, team officials decided to take a more aggressive approach.

Thanks to an ongoing working partnership with Ticketmaster, the Cowboys learned that mobile entry made up 21 percent of all attendance at AT&T Stadium that season, with over 80 percent of single game ticket holders utilizing mobile entry.

"Over the last couple of years, we've been working with teams, like the Cowboys, to really explore the benefits of pushing fans to mobile," Jared Smith, Ticketmaster President of North America said in a 2016 interview with SportTechie. " How do you educate and push people to mobile to use the technology, which is both better for them and the team. If you can make (mobile ticketing) work at AT&T Stadium, you can make it work anywhere."

Starting in the fall of 2017, the Target Center in Minneapolis – which is home to both the Timberwolves and Lynx – will go completely wireless, offering a new level of accessibility to fans through their mobile devices. While the advancement in technology for the arena is a boost for fans, it also opens up new opportunities to Meyer and her team.

Once a fan enters the arena by using their phone, Meyer said they will have access to a smartphone app that will allow them to interact with in-game promotions being displayed on the arena's scoreboard, to menus for various concession stands around the venue, as well as to purchase food and merchandise from any number of vendors.

"Our focus is to try and give people what they're asking for," Meyer said.

That's where the digital connection – and the data that can be garnered out of it – comes into play. Meyer and her team do their best to remain on the forefront of technological innovation when they can and are the first franchises in the greater Minneapolis market to go completely digital when it comes to the interaction their teams have with their fans.

The data that is made available to Meyer opens new doors to Timberwolves and Lynx fans and provides a different level of insight into the fan base both franchises are trying to connect with on a regular basis.

"That's the nice thing about the data - you can allow the data to dictate the story and how we need to respond," Meyer said. "It tells us what people are preferring, ...besides what's happening on the court. Certainly, content is big for us. The content we are creating out of all of our different channels is a variety of not only what's

"**Our focus is to try and give people what they're asking for**"

going on with the players, but what the franchise is doing within the community. What other outreach are we doing? What pop culture things are we doing? There's a lot of things the brand is doing that don't have anything to do with the game."

As is being done at the professional level, major sporting events at other levels like the NCAA and heavily attended college championship events are understanding the importance of connecting with fans on a variety of levels.

> "…you can allow the data to dictate the story and how we need to respond"

At the 2017 NCAA Final Four, Turner Sports partnered with event sponsors such as Infiniti and Capital One to host events like the FanFest and Tip-off Tailgate. At these popular events, fans were able to participate in youth basketball clinics, free-throw shooting challenges, sweepstakes and other events.

These events not only engaged fans, but also provided Turner Sports with the chance to use first-party data from fans. Working with Umbel, Turner employed digital waiver forms for each event which were required to be filled out before fans could participate. The digital waivers were readily accessible on iPads or through the Final Four app that fans were able to access on their own personal devices.

Turner was able then to turn a legal necessity into a fan engagement tool for two events that put them in touch with 22,000 adult names and email addresses. Once armed with this information, Turner began the process of reaching out to fans.
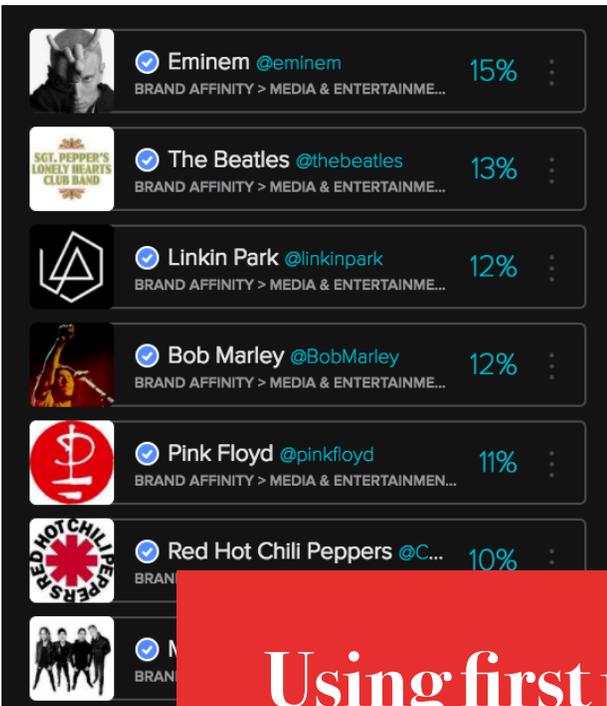
By doing so, Turner gained important information that could enrich fan profiles to include household income, family size, which made for a much more complete view of the fans who participated in each event.
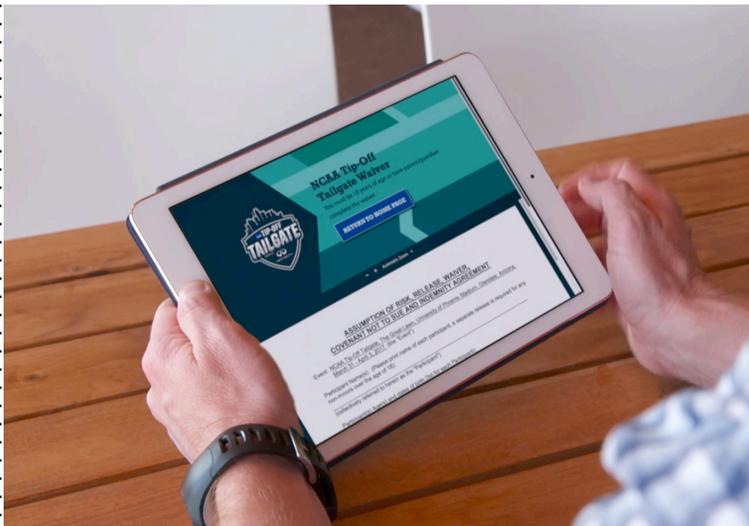
By better understanding who was participating in the FanFest and Tip-Off Tailgate, Turner had the capability to determine what these fans wanted out of the event and provided specific improvements they could use in the future. Perhaps more importantly, though, it also activated fans to help determine which fans might attend similar events in the future, identify fans who were most likely to purchase merchandise throughout the Final Four weekend and surface which fans were likely to engage most with digital content.

Umbel's Malo agrees. Using first party data, including brand affinity data – down to the type of music a fan likes to listen to – can be instrumental for franchises like the Timberwolves and Lynx who are constantly looking for ways to enhance the overall experience once fans enter the arena.

Turner was able to turn a legal necessity into a **fan engagement tool** for two events that gave them **access to 22,000 adult names and email addresses**

Eminem @eminem	15%
BRAND AFFINITY > MEDIA & ENTERTAINME...	
The Beatles @thebeatles	13%
BRAND AFFINITY > MEDIA & ENTERTAINME...	
Linkin Park @linkinpark	12%
BRAND AFFINITY > MEDIA & ENTERTAINME...	
Bob Marley @BobMarley	12%
BRAND AFFINITY > MEDIA & ENTERTAINME...	
Pink Floyd @pinkfloyd	11%
BRAND AFFINITY > MEDIA & ENTERTAINMEN...	
Red Hot Chili Peppers @C...	10%
BRAN	

In the case of the NBA's Indiana Pacers, the data provided them with a better idea of what kind of music to play in their arena and how to better connect with fans in attendance for more than just the basketball game.

In 2014, the Pacers began work to improve their understanding of their existing fan base. Doing so, the Pacers believed, would help to create a more comprehensive and cohesive fan experience while providing the franchise with a better way of anticipating the interests their fans had before they arrived at the arena.

Using first party data, including brand affinity data – down to the type of music a fan likes to listen to – can be instrumental for franchises

The Pacers used first-party data to create 30,000 user fan profiles, which the team could in turn gain a better understanding of the fans that were attending games. Suddenly, data that may have at one point seemed meaningless and useless could be segmented into specifically populated groups based on age, gender and household income.

The Pacers also launched a marketing campaign in which they offered $5 tickets to a targeted group of fans. Over the course of the campaign, however, the team discovered fans were actually willing to purchase higher priced tickets – almost 15 times the number of the initial $5 ticket promotion.

As a result, the Pacers gained 13 times the return on ad spend (ROAS) on Facebook - a marked promotional improvement compared to the results that previous campaigns had produced. It proved to be another example of the benefits a team can gain by using first-party data to better grasping exactly what makes up the franchise's fan base and reaching individuals on levels that cannot be reached through more conventional methods.

UMBEL 1ST PARTY DATA COLLECTION

WI-FI

TICKET SALES

DATA ENRICHMENT
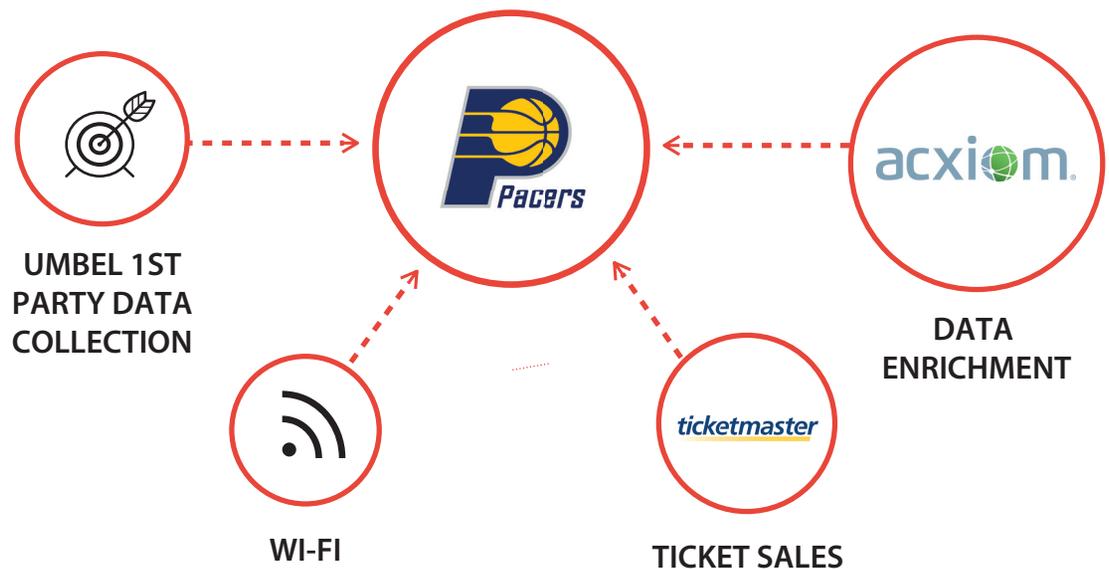
Now, by using precise messaging - whether it be via email or social media promotions based on fan interest – teams can more effectively communicate with the fans they depend on to keep a franchise's brand relevant. Team officials have discovered a simple truth: the more relevant the message, the more likely fans will remain engaged with the franchise and the more likely they will continue to stay connected on a daily basis.

"That's really where the power lies and understanding how they want to interact with these teams and what platform they want to do it on," Malo said. "Teams are beginning to understand that there is additional value beyond being a ticketed customer. There are fans that want to consume content and there will be a continual shift and movement in the sports industry to try to monetize the value of consumers and fans who are just content consumers."

Pacers officials quickly understood the value of making the most of the data that had become so readily available to them. Now, the Pacers use the data to not only connect with fans, but to generate better ticket sales, identify and partner with corporate sponsors and produce memorable in-venue experiences for fans.

"Umbel has given us unprecedented insight into our fans," Jeff Tzucker, the Pacers' former Director of Digital Marketing said. "When anyone mentions Umbel around the office, everyone listens."

Knowing Your Audience

Like the Pacers, the NHL's Florida Panthers have become increasingly more aware of their market in recent years. But while Indiana is a proven basketball hotbed, Florida – and specifically South Florida – is anything but a traditional hockey market.

The Panthers joined the NHL in 1993 and opened up a highly populated market to a sport that few locals grow up playing. The Panthers reached the Stanley Cup Final in 1996, but have missed the playoffs more than not in the years since. Yet, despite their lack of success on the ice, the team has discovered ways to grow their fan base.

What Panthers officials discovered in looking at their metropolitan Miami audience is that due to Florida's melting pot-like environment and ability to draw residents from other parts of the country, the Panthers find themselves in a unique situation.

Although native Floridians may not fit the mold of traditional hockey fans, many New Yorkers and New Englanders – along with a host of other locations from around the United States, regularly migrate to Florida. That creates a unique opportunity to tap into other NHL's teams fan bases and gave the Panthers the opportunity to reach more fans.

…the more relevant the message, the more likely fans will remain engaged…

Indiana Pacers
Sponsored · ✓

Join us Saturday at 7 PM as the Pacers face their longtime division rival, the Bucks.

Pacers vs. Bucks
The Pacers look to gain an early-season edge on the Bucks in the Central Division. The Bucks boast a young, explosive nucleus aiming to improve on last year's 41-41 record.

By using data collected from ticket sales generated through the Panthers' corporate partner, Ticketmaster, team officials discovered that fans of teams like the New York Rangers and Montreal Canadians were becoming regulars at Panthers' games. Geographical data generated through the Umbel platform provided Panthers officials with direction of how to reach different segments of fans, largely based on where they live.

For example, Panthers marketing officials learned that the largest population of northeastern United States natives reside in West Palm Beach, while Miami's population includes a large number of South Americans.

Based on that information, rather than being able to create game day experiences just for Panthers fans, marketers were able to draw fans of opposing teams in, which essentially doubled the reach of their marketing efforts.

> **…marketers were able to draw fans of opposing teams in, which essentially doubled the reach of their marketing efforts.**

"We're welcoming all fans," said Amanda Cifu, the Panthers' senior marketing manager. "Obviously, when they get here, it's our job to get them to like our brand, but we're just trying to get them into the building."

As the Panthers began to investigate who their audience was, Cifu discovered an interesting trend. Cifu began the process working off the assumption that – like in other professional sports markets around the country – the typical ticket purchaser was male and likely between the ages of 45 and 64.

It proved to be a misconception. The more Cifu began to study the data, she learned that females were purchasing tickets at a high rate, especially when it came to single-game tickets. Although 75 percent of the franchise's season tickets were being purchased by men (with an average age of 49), 51 percent of single-game tickets were being bought by women (with an average age of 46).

Overall, within the confines of the Panthers' tri-county marketing area (which includes Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach), 53 percent of the Panthers designated market area was female and 47 percent was male. Conversely, in Canada – where hockey is king – 69 percent of the DMA is male and 31 percent is female while in New York, 57 percent is male and only 43 percent is female.

"That was a big 'oh wow' moment for us," Cifu said of the trend in Florida.

She added: "We realized we actually have a lot more females than we would have expected to be a fan of the team."

Cifu and her team discovered that when it came to single-game tickets, women were often in search of something to do with their kids and family on a weeknight. That prompted the Panthers to design more budget-friendly packages for young families, who could get four tickets, four hot dogs and four sodas for one price.

And even if families were coming with the intent of cheering for the Panthers' opponent, the population of kids provided Cifu and her fellow marketers with the chance to get youngsters in Panthers gear and start them on the road to making the home team their favorite team.

The Panthers are entering their third full season working with Umbel.

Like other sports franchises, the Panthers rely on first-party data that can differentiate fans by age, gender, where they live and how much income they generate each year. Although that information is valuable, Cifu learned even more from data collected through social media channels like Facebook.

Digital activation campaigns require social authentication via Facebook, which in turn, provides marketers with information like what kind of music fans enjoy listening to and what television programs they regularly watch.

Digital is on the Rise

95% of Brands leverage sponsorships through social media.

Cifu said in the Panthers' case, the problem wasn't having enough data to work with. Instead, their marketers struggled with how they were acting on that information. Malo said it's a common obstacle for team officials. But when data is used effectively, teams are able to better target audiences with messaging – whether it be through social media or email – that hits home.

Effective messaging remains a challenge for a number of pro franchises, many of whom continue to use a general email blast to reach fans. That is largely ineffective, especially when more and more of a team's fan base is younger and tends to take games in differently than other segments of consumers, often choosing to watch on a handheld device rather than choose to attend in person.

Given the new reality, many teams are searching for new ways to engage their fan bases and to speak to them the right way to incentivize them to actually come out to the games. By understanding them and knowing what they like, teams can put together much better strategies for how to not only reach fans, but to get them in the door when otherwise, attempting to do so might might prove futile.

Social media plays increasingly plays a major role. In the past, teams would build social media campaigns to get fans as many Facebook likes or Twitter followers as they actually could. But they quickly

realized that what they actually knew about those people only provided them so much to go on, which forced them to dive deeper into the ways they reached out to fans.

What Cifu and others like her have discovered is that by tracking fans' likes and dislikes through something as simple as Facebook likes can impact event attendance at games and other live events that has little – or even nothing – to do with the sport itself.

Effective messaging remains a challenge for a number of pro franchises

While the Panthers have continually relied on geographical data to determine where fans were driving in from to attend games, they used data from social media channels to determine how to entertain fans once they arrived.

Facebook likes from fans helped Cifu and her department organize specialized group theme nights. Data showed that there was a certain segment of the Panthers' ticket-buying audience that had an affinity for the Grateful Dead and so the Panthers introduced Grateful Dead nights when a Grateful Dead cover band performed during intermissions of that night's game.

During the holidays, a time when temperatures in Florida remain summer-like, the Panthers promoted their Game Night experience as a way to cool off. They used the arena's ice surface as a way to connect with fans' nostalgic side and promoted home games as an environment where fans could wear fall or winter clothing regardless of the temperature readings outside.

The Florida Panthers ✔   👍 Like Page   •••

- Four tickets
- Autographed puck
- Exclusive Grateful Dead prize 💀
Enter to win! » bit.ly/gratefuldeadcontest

Grateful Dead night at the florida panthers | Florida Panthers

FLORIDA-PANTHERS.APPS.UMBEL.COM

Data also showed that fans appreciated the humor of television series like "Family Guy," which prompted the team to introducevclips from the animated hit show as part of the overall atmosphere. Although fans weren't sure how the team was picking up on things like which television programs they viewed at home, Cifu learned that patrons appreciated the effort and felt as if the Panthers had attempted to make fans feel at home while they were at the arena.

But the connection started with effective messaging and marketing efforts.

"It's not always just about hockey and the game itself," Cifu said. "It's about the experience and getting people to relate to more than just the sport itself."

Cifu added: "We want to give them a relevant message. That's the beauty of it. How do you get in front of people with a message that will really resonate? It's one of the thousands of things they're filtering out every

The Panthers have relied on geographical data to determine where fans were driving in from, and now use social media data to determine how to entertain fans once they arrive.

day. That's part of the challenge – how do we put a message in front of them that's relevant to them and that they're going to respond to."

Having data is one thing. Putting it to use is another. If used correctly, fan data can help franchises begin and continue important conversations that will help enhance the overall fan experience.

While many franchises and leagues have existing pay-per-click campaigns that are running across various networks and platforms including social media channels and email, the temptation may be to look to add to what they are already doing.

> "That's part of the challenge – how do we put a message in front of them that's relevant to them and that they're going to respond to."

While pro franchises and college teams don't need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to how marketers are carrying out their strategies for connecting with fans, many – like the University of Oregon's football program are re-evaluating how they approach what they do.

At the University of Oregon, marketers were charged with the responsibility of selling individual tickets to key dates on the school's football schedule. While selling tickets to ensure a high-energy environment was the primary goal, marketing officials within the university's athletic department turned to Umbel to collect data they could use in the future.

Campaign Snapshot

260,445
Impressions

2,533
Website Clicks
(1.0% CTR)

424
Conversions
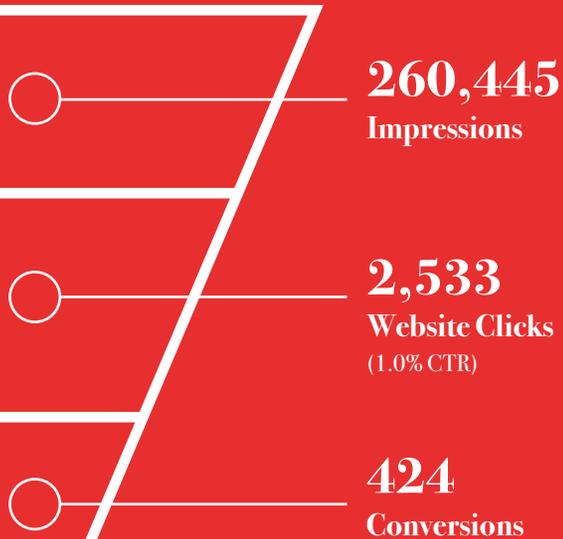
The Ducks' first campaign drove 424 conversions for a single home game.

14x
Return on Ad Spend

The department created a campaign that allowed ticket buyers to use log-ins to social media channels to have a chance to run onto the field with the football team. By targeting high-value fans through a creative marketing campaign, school officials were able not only to sell football tickets, but to gain valuable insights into their fan base and then use the data to run the ticket sales offers on Facebook.

The result: Oregon marketers were able to discover through the data that fans had brand affinities for specific airlines, casinos, resorts as well as a popular local coffee shop. In addition, the campaign provided thousands of fan profiles and marketers were able to achieve consistently strong returns on ad spend for future ticket sales campaigns, including a 14.3x ROAS for a basketball game against a conference rival. The success in basketball and football led marketers at the school to also create a model it used to sell tickets to future events such as the NCAA Track and Field championships.

"Teams are always trying to grow their fan base in local and regional markets because that obviously drives their ticket revenues and their merchandise revenues and their sponsorship revenues," Malo said. "But I think now, they're starting to understand there is an audience beyond that and where does that lead from a monetization standpoint. Depending on the team, you see some local growth, but what we're discovering is that...it's a younger audience engaging with teams through these social platforms. That's very attractive for teams that are always looking to tap into a younger audience."

Making the Most of Smarter Partnerships

Brooklyn Sports and Entertainment (BSE) was searching for a way to create a unique opportunity for fans of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets and NHL's New York Islanders, both of which the company manages.

BSE officials worked with one of its corporate sponsors, JetBlue, and launched the "Fly Me To" marketing campaign, which offered fans the chance to enter to win two tickets on JetBlue to travel to see either the Nets or the Islanders play on the road.

Using Umbel's Activation campaigns, BSE created 10 sweepstakes across seven cities. But while other similar marketing campaigns likely would have taken weeks – if not months – BSE was able to launch their campaign in just 10 days. JetBlue, in turn, supported each of the campaigns and received prominent branding on all of BSE's digital assets.

BSE promoted the sweepstakes with Facebook ads that were targeted to sports fans around the region and to people who had demonstrated a brand affinity for JetBlue.

The partnership proved to be a win-win scenario.

"Fly Me To was a great step forward in JetBlue's activation with the Nets and the Islanders," said Ashley Graf, JetBlue's New York regional marketing manager. "It provided a natural tie-in for JetBlue through-out the season, and the co-marketing of it resulted in some of the highest sweepstakes entries we've ever seen. Furthermore, it helped us demonstrate our destinations while capturing valuable customer insights and data that will help us market to these audiences more effectively in the future."

On average $60 billion gets spent around the world on sponsorships annually. Of that $60 billion, $20 billion is spent in North America alone.

On average $60 billion gets spent around the world on sponsorships annually. Of that $60 billion, $20 billion is spent in North America alone.

Eighty percent of those dollars are spent on sports and entertainment.

But with that much being spent, making the most of available technology has become a critical component of the formula. According to the Association of National Advertisers,

95 percent of brands leverage sponsorships through social media while 71 percent do it through digital and mobile promotions.

Conversely, 46 percent of sponsors rank their digital/social/mobile presence as either important or very important second only to category exclusivity that is now tied to on-site signage. Prior to 2015, digital presence wasn't even in the Top 10 of how business got done.

Sponsors are realizing that digital means that their partners are receiving much more data back – and they are looking for it. Eighty percent of marketers report that the need to validate sponsorship results has increased dramatically. And yet, 35 percent of marketers actually measure their campaign's effectiveness and impact.

Further yet, 25 percent don't gather or use any data in their day-to-day decision-making while 50 percent of marketers that do measure data don't have a standardized way of doing it.

The Islanders and Nets' campaigns provided a variety of added benefits for BSE and to JetBlue, who, over the course of the promotion were able to gauge the success of the campaign's performance as well as collect additional data.
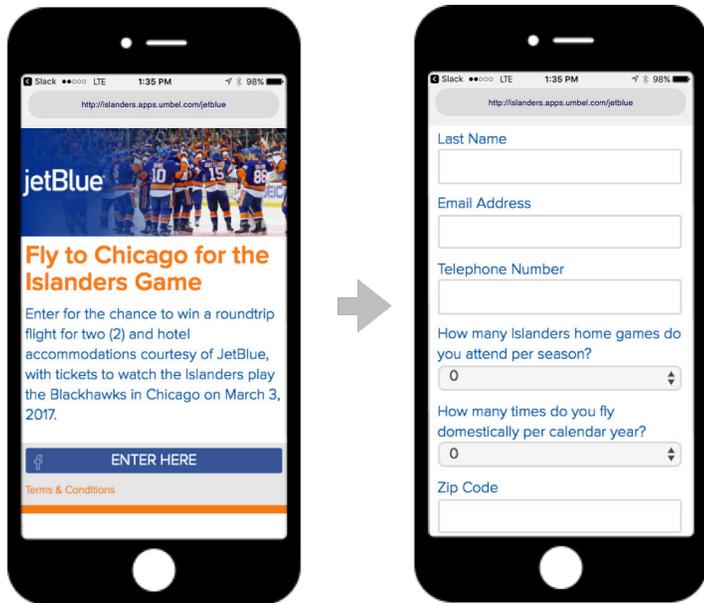
35 percent of marketers actually measure their campaign's effectiveness and impact.

As the sponsor, JetBlue received brand awareness, campaign performance metrics and data on the Nets and Islanders fans who were interacting with the campaign. By collecting data via the promotion, BSE and JetBlue both gained access to unprecedented insights into fans that engaged with the promotions. That data included contact information, demographics and specific brand affinities – all from fans' social media profiles.

This information then became part of BSE's broader database it had already built with Umbel, which BSE teams use throughout the organization to drive fan engagement and ticket sales.

Through the promotion, fans were also given the option of receiving communications from JetBlue, which offered the airline additional information such as whether that fan had traveled with JetBlue and if so, how many times.

The promotion was a hit as more than 15,000 fans engaged with the campaign. Of the total participants, 9,765 were net-new to the BSE database. While the data that came out of the promotion was

instrumental to BSE's future endeavors, another benefit came out of the interaction as BSE officials were able to track the number of sweepstakes participants that went on to buy tickets for either an Islanders or Nets game.

BSE earned a 7.4x return on ad spend from the Islanders campaign and a 3.3x return on ad spend for the Nets. And at a time when sponsors are looking to get the most for their money when they partner with franchises like the Nets and Islanders, the JetBlue promotion demonstrated the level of success that can be had if executed properly.

"Sponsorship investments for teams are becoming more and more scrutinized and teams need to provide their results," Malo said.

As part of the campaign, BSE was able to provide JetBlue with detailed metrics about the success of the campaign. Those metrics included impressions and the number of fans who entered to win. But the data went even deeper as BSE could offer up detailed information on fans who participated including demographics, brand affinities and even answers to survey questions that could help not only BSE, but their corporate partner, JetBlue, get insight into their customers that they would have never had otherwise.

"Sponsorship investments for teams are becoming more and more scrutinized and **teams need to provide their results**"

Even after the campaign ended, the interaction between BSE, JetBlue and fans continued as both organizations ran the promotion on social media as winners were able to share their travel experiences across a variety of platforms.

The result: Fan insight and data can now be used to drive strategy for future marketing campaigns that BSE can use – not only with JetBlue, but with a host of other corporate partners and sponsors.

"Umbel offered us a turnkey solution to deliver on both external client objectives and internal marketing priorities," said Ashley Kahler, BSE's senior director of partnership marketing and brand strategy. "We activated a digital platform for JetBlue that hit their key objectives and utilized these engagements to build our internal database with new customer records that were passed along to our ticket sales team."
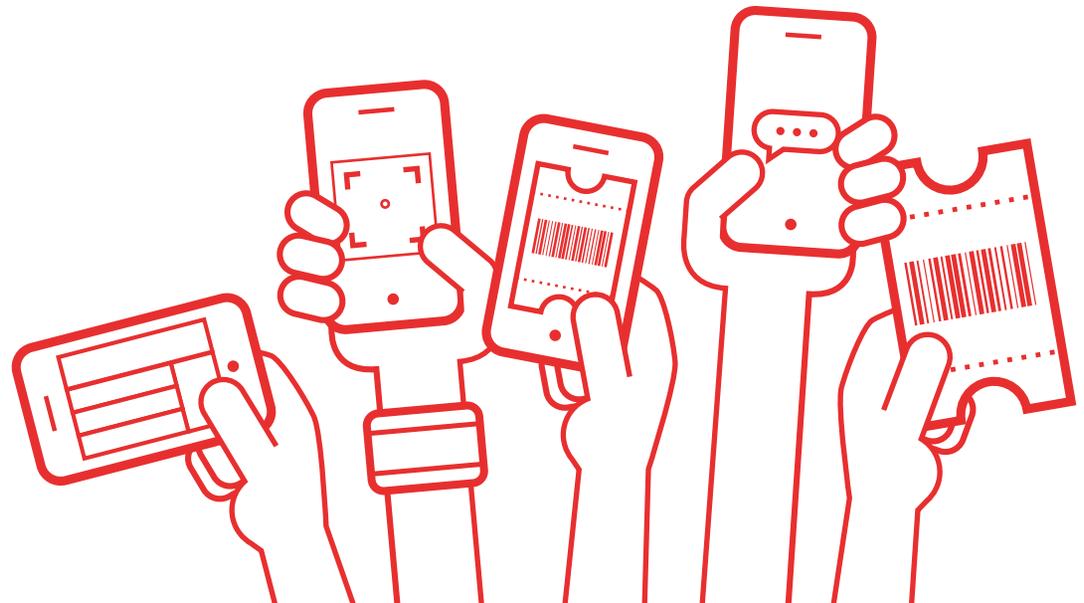
A Final Thought:
Think Bigger and Better

In the past, the majority of fans who passed through a venue's gates were die-hard supporters of either the team itself or of the sport being played that night. But now, a team's fan base is much more diversified, which makes the overall appeal to the event itself much more important than perhaps at any other time.

As teams continue to move forward both with the types of offerings that are available and with the technological advances at their disposal, casting as wide of a net as possible helps to expand the customer base – sports fan or not.

The wider the fan base, the bigger variety of data that is readily available and ready to be processed for future use. And the more a team understands that audience - whether it connects with the team at a live event or through the content the franchise is putting out on its various social media channels – the healthier the relationship will be and the more it will flourish in the future.

> **The more a team understands that audience, the healthier the relationship will be and the more it will flourish in the future.**

But here's the thing: The reach is bigger than it has ever been before, which makes getting a team's message across even more vital – not only on a local level, but to an audience that wasn't effectively reachable not all that long ago.

"There's a bigger spectrum of data points," Malo said. "With a fan base, if you look at certain metrics, it's growing certainly on social channels because now you're talking to a global audience and regional and national audience where once you weren't able to measure that. (In the past), the only measurable was how many tickets you sold and what your TV ratings were. "Now you can measure the size of your social audience. That aspect is growing and really, I think it's opened up a lot of eyes to the power of these brands beyond a 75-mile radius."

Now it's just a matter of what a team wants to do with it.